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7. Only vegetables whose spiritual essence does not have to be preserved are cooked, "for to cook is to shatter the soul."

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In each village are grown one or several small fields of tomatoes, called "Faro's fields," or "fields of twins." The fruits of these fields are reserved for the worship of the spirit (1).

1. On the site of the ancient village of Soroba, at the edge of a pond located near the present-day village, there are two rectangular fields of tomatoes dedicated to male twins and four square fields dedicated to female twins in the village. Each year the villagers gather at the edge of the pond for a ceremony. The symbolic words relating to twins are recited and a prayer is said, to be followed by ablutions.
The fruit that is harvested is offered to the spirit by squashing it on a neighboring tree trunk.

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/49/ All metals belong to Faro. The seven /sic/ principal metals are the following: copper (male), brass (female), gold, silver, tin, and iron. Copper and brass come from the fifth sky (koblenkaba). They descend at each thunderclap and, along with the "thunderstones," penetrated into the soil. They were discovered by a diviner at the bottom of a pond that had dried up because of a broken taboo. Because of their divine origin, copper and brass represent "Faro's sounds." [301] These sounds twist themselves around the spiralled copper or brass earrings that everyone wears and penetrate the eardrum, thus making it possible to hear words. Gold plays a part in the building of certain altars (boli) to which it confers strength and stability.

The sacrifices made with or on copper, brass, or gold have a restraining influence on the spirit for they are of his own essence.

No woman wearing copper, brass, or gold jewelry, may cross the Niger without opening her luggage out of deference to the spirit, for "all ornaments belong to him and often must be returned to him after death.

[784] It is taboo to bring metal into contact with cow's butter, an oily substance that does not allow water to penetrate.

826 827 The mouth and tongue, ejectors of the word, can be compared in importance to the ear, a receptive organ. It is through the ear that man receives and remembers the word. Its role is comparable to that of the sex organs which eject life and receive it. The ear in itself has both sexes: male by its auricle, female by its orifice. This duality expresses the basic duality of man. That is why the corpse of [164] an uncircumcised man is sometimes amputated at the ear rather than at the foreskin.

826 301 Because of the symbolism of its shape and because of its function, the ear is adorned. Men formerly wore three copper rings on the right ear and four on the left, the number seven representing the complete being, male and female, ni and dya. Women wear four rings on each auricle or, if they can, twenty-two, which represent the twenty-two stages of creation, or the twenty-two generative categories. Sometimes, for both men and women, a single ring attached to the earlobe represents the mother of the other rings (1).

[178]

1. In olden times, men and women wore cowrie shells on their ears in the place of copper rings, a custom which would seem to be still respected in certain villages today. These shells played the same part as copper.

827 191 301 776 But the role of this adornment goes much further. As symbol of the word, it is through the ornaments that the spirit Téliko, master of sound, hears what /68/ is said to man. They attract sound and send it back to Téliko and Faro, who thus judge the acts and words of men. To wear earrings did not originally mean to adorn oneself, but to hear the spirits as well as to force them to hear what was said (2). Its second effect is to embarass the liar, the bearer of false news

2. Rings placed on musical instruments have the same purpose and also symbolize those worn by men. See p. 282.

or evil words, by putting him in the position of being understood by the invisible, therefore of being judged by them. A pleasant or well-intentioned word benefits the one to whom it is addressed and this

827 191 301 776 gain is felt as a contribution to the beneficial nyama. "The spirit Téliko transforms the air emitted by the speaker into favorable nyama; upon hearing a good word, it would be necessary to stop one's ears so that this nyama does not leave the person who received it." Moreover, if a person opens his eyes wide while watching the speaker, "the latter's nyama is able to penetrate the body of the listener" and spread within it as a reviving tide. While this takes place, the good word saturates the air, helping the action of breathing, hence the life, of the listener. "One breathes," says an informant, "with the nyama of the words which enter through the eyes and ears." But this process is not one-sided. The good nyama returns to the speaker through his own eyes while he is looking at the other person. He is reflected in the person with whom he is talking and it is as though he were talking to himself. There is a beneficial exchange even when only one of the two actors speaks.

Inversely, a bad word or an insult upsets the listener and rebounds, acting upon the insulting person. This harmonious arrangement summarizes precisely and powerfully the universal movement, principle of life and strength for all beings. It comprises an individual movement provoked by the word which acts upon the body by developing and regularizing the rhythm of breathing, and a collective movement set off by the return of the word to the speaker. Because of the effect of the spoken word, exchanges are established that are favorable both to the rhythm of individual breathing and to the equilibrium of universal life. This effect is not limited to words in the strict sense; sight enjoys the same prerogatives as hearing and diction. If an object [431] belonging to a certain person is seen and coveted by another, the owner cannot refuse to give it to him. The act of seeing has established by itself, between the stranger and the object, a bond which is affectively stronger than that of ownership.

826 The articulated parts of the human body are just as meaningful as the head. The bones, more lasting than the flesh /69/ and a testimony, in the grave, of the life that has passed, are its foundation and framework.

The navel is the central point of the articulations: that is why Faro, when he drowns a person, returns the body after having slit the nose and navel. This double mutilation shows that he has reclaimed the head and the body of the guilty man. The articulations are the indication of man's condition in the new order. Where he was once

826 is also through the feet that a part of man's strength is deposited in the sweepings and rubbish upon which he treads. Their role as receptacles appears in the rituals concerning household refuse and the dirt on roads and paths.

Like the little finger, the small toe symbolizes the whole person. [301] It is sometimes adorned with a silver ring, symbol of the word, which recalls that man's body is the seat of the word extended within him from head to feet (1).

1. In olden times the ring on the small toe was made of red nyama fiber (nyama fu), which played the same role as metal.

831 The notion of the bisexuality of human beings is fundamental: 826 the spiritual principles are sexed like the body, whose ambivalence /71/ is evident during childhood: the boy is feminine in his foreskin; the girl is masculine in her clitoris. One of the aims of circumcision [304] and excision is to help the child attain the sex to which it is apparently destined by removing the organ of the opposite sex. (2) But the

[171] 2. The same conception is found among the Dogon; see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 185.

initial duality of the soul and body is the very foundation of the human being. He is complete only if he originally received it, and he retains it even after the operation imposed by physical and social life, [774] for the soul of the opposite sex, though diminished in the body, remains present in the shadow, the dya. He also rediscovers his dual unity when he marries. A married couple are a unit for their dya [581] join as do their bodies in an act which is not merely physical and which realizes the ideal union of twins.

831 The sex to which one belongs dominates one's whole existence on earth. Objects and tools bear masculine or feminine marks, according 801 to the rules of the division of labor. The numbers three (man) and four (woman) are abridged forms of the sex. "Primitive men" who, according to the Bambara expressed themselves mostly by gestures and signs, engraved their rare objects with the number of

845 851 each twin is the dya of the other and that this term means "shadow of the body," "spiritual double," as well as "balance." To trade is dyago.

845 301 [531] Three or four days after the name-giving ceremony, depending on their sex, the twins are given bracelets of white metal representing their dya. Geometrical symbols of the universe, the sky and the earth, are engraved on each of these (1). The opening of the bracelet repre-

1. This figure is formed by a rectangle divided into two equal superposed squares, including a multiplication sign in the lower square to represent the earth, and an open v in the upper square to represent the sky.

sents that of the incomplete terrestrial world. When the twins die [766] they will be buried with the bracelets closed over their arms or their ankles to signify that they have penetrated a complete and closed world. Formerly the sacrifices to Faro were carried out with ornaments 845 borrowed from a twin. The person making the sacrifice presented 301 them to the /87/ river while saying: "The iron of the twins is witness 782 to the sacrifice offered to Faro." (2) After the ceremony, everyone

2. Flani neke ye ma ɣere ye faro sõni la.

gave white kola nuts to the twin; the interested party then went to the village square and waved in the air his arms bedecked with ornaments to spread to the four cardinal points Faro's beneficial nyama acquired in the course of the sacrifice. In certain areas twins wear a pendant in the shape of double slave fetters, called dyõ neke, "irons of the captive," or an amulet called sinzin, "support," composed of a little piece of wood carved in the shape of a double cup and preferably made by a Bozo. A man who has had twins three times [778] must acquire a double pot which is always kept full of water and which becomes the object of an annual sacrifice (3).

3. See p. 124, n. 1.

881 302 On the same day the young girls in certain localities have a characteristic ceremony. One of them whitens her face, breast, and back with a mixture of milk and ashes. Thus daubed, she dashes out of the village brandishing the spatula (to-n-galama) which is used to stir mush (to) in the pot; her companions follow her, shouting. The band goes around the village four times in this fashion, each time stopping at the crossroads. At these points the girl who is bedaubed throws handfuls of food (1), provided by her companions, to the spirits, crying: "Dege dule (2)." Her companions reply: "Naloma (3)."

[262]

1. Usually basi (couscous) made with fish.

2. Literally, "thick mush."

3. That is, "fool."

881 527 [273] [576] The eve of the soli (soli-si). During the evening preceding the soli, the families concerned enjoy an ample meal, accompanied by innumerable jugs of beer (dlo) as is the custom at all festivals among the Bambara. This is a time of special merriment, of shining faces and greasy hands, and it is good form for the men and boys to belch noisily, saying repeatedly: "ne ne fa," literally, "I am full," that is, "I am replete." The [301] women wander about the lanes, wrapped in their best skirts, with balls of amber in their hair and small silver or even gold rings in their ears and nostrils and rather heavy bracelets on their [482] arms and ankles. Some carry jars of dlo on their heads, while others carry gourds full of couscous, dege, or hot sauces which are often nauseous with smoked or spoiled fish. After the meal everyone gathers on the public square, forming a wide circle whose center is reserved for the dancers; piles of dried millet [373] stalks are used to make bright fires which illuminate the scene and warm the audience.

881 302 The "boys of the soli" (soli-ma-tye-u), their heads

881 At the end of this time, the nyana-n-son-na-ba and his council having come to an agreement with the sema to end the period of seclusion, each leader performs certain magic passes, under the boys' tree and near the girls' huts, to dispel any evil. The Bambara are convinced that so long as the period of convalescence is not officially closed the circumcised boys or excised girls are as much a danger to society as society is to them; that is why they must spend this period in seclusion. Furthermore, anything used by them during their seclusion is impregnated with this evil and may spread it.

881 783

Therefore, as soon as the interdict is lifted, everything is collected to be burned at sunset (2). Near the trees outside

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2. However, personal effects (the boys' kursi, dloki, and baufla, and the girls' tafe) are not burned; along with their stains, these are impregnated with virtues which make them particularly valuable for talismans, amulets, and other magic weapons.

the village the mats, the n-koso-m-bara, the gourds, millet stalks, rags, etc., are all piled up, and the nyana-n-son-na-ba sets them afire. The boys and girls jump over the fire three times; they are then free to return to the village. They run home promptly to adorn themselves for the festival celebrating their return.

881 Once more there are lavish meals and interminable drinking bouts, followed by a general gathering in the public square. People come from all directions, among them appallingly decrepit old women who try to manage everything. [247]

891 On this occasion, the boys, soli-ma-tye, appear for the first time in true man's attire, full trousers, cap with earlaps, and an ample new shirt. With lance in hand, they swagger about and simulate the behavior of warriors; they are now tye-kura, "new men."

881 The girls also are decked out to excess in women's attire. 301 Wearing several skirts and adorned with all the jewelry relatives

88| and friends have kindly lent for the occasion, they advance
301 shyly. In some areas, notably in the Bani region, they wear bundles of cowries, from the bride price already paid for them, around the hips and hanging on each side of the head (1).

[302 17]

1. Bambara girls who have gone through the soli have their heads shaved. Among other peoples, on the contrary, girls have their hair braided like women for the first time, but to the braid is added a tuft of the hair shaved off seven days after birth; this hair has usually been lost, but a small tuft is made to simulate it.

881 Boys and girls, following the old women who lead them,
[535] dance around the orchestra, and then all sit down in a circle. The nyana-n-son-na-ba takes the floor. He speaks in a low voice, and, as is proper, his words are repeated in a loud voice by a herald. He proclaims the end of the soli, recalls its principal events, and indicates clearly which children have participated in the rite; each boy and girl is specifically named. He will also be sure to point out that the soli is an immemorial cus-
[578] tom among the Bambara and that there is no worse insult than to treat a Bambara as uncircumcised. He closes by inviting everyone to eat, drink, and celebrate in the joy and harmony appropriate to such a festival.

[535] Dancing is resumed, and the boys and girls of the soli take part. The festivities continue as long as the refreshments last, usually several days.

To end it all, no one leaves without giving at least a few kola nuts to the heroes of the festival, the boys and girls.

The last phase is the thanks given by the soli-ma to those who assisted at the da-woro. In noisy bands, boys and girls dash about the village in two distinct groups. The girls' group is headed by the soma-moso who is called masa (queen), followed by the masa-ma-kono (vice-queen) and the masa-ma-kono-segere [248] (follower of the vice-queen); the last girl in the

794 of Kore-dyuga-tigi and has the same meaning.

most part strangely accoutered dancers, each of whom dresses [301] as his fancy dictates. As ornaments, the Kor'dyuga wear strings of beautiful red beans, which are inedible, called n-go ble. These beans are about the size of a large dragée and throughout the western Sudan are used as protection against evil spirits. [292] These dancers have a leader, the Koro-duga-tigi or Kor'dyuga-tigi, who is further distinguished by a kind of cloak made entirely of bits of reed stalks. On his head he wears a conical hat made of the same reeds, and in his hand he carries a long wand from which hang birds' skulls, packets of sorghum straw, gourd stems, etc. In addition to the dancers, the clergy is accompanied by [785] flagellants (bisa-tyi-la), torchbearers (ta-tugu-la-n-tigi), and people who lash themselves with bundles of thorns (the ngoni-sa-ma-u).

[534] Of course, the Kore has its orchestra, which includes drums (denu-ba), a kind of castanet (kinge), and gourds filled with seeds or pebbles (nkude) and pierced with holes.

794 The cult has the usual ceremonies, with the two great festivals at the times of planting and harvesting. On these oc- 796 casions the Kore-tigi officiates, as the nyana-n-son-na-ba does with respect to nyana dugu-da-siri. He makes the offerings, performs the sacrifices, and sets forth the requests at the foot of the sacred tree, after having thanked the god-protector. The kara and the Kore-kongolo are sprinkled with the blood of the victims; thus, the manes and the nyana of the boli are honored simultaneously.

[764] There is always a meeting of the brotherhood when a Kore-de dies. There are offerings, sacrifices, and communion with all the offerings, which require one or more days of orgies to be consumed, depending on the importance of the deceased, because elders in [282] important posts like that of nyana-n-son-na-ba, etc., are particularly honored at their death.

Young men are admitted only once every seven years, and it is at this time that the ceremonies are most elaborate.

766 614 White oxen are sacrificed on the tomb; their hides are used to make new drumheads for the tabala, and the meat [328] is offered to the manes of the deceased and then distributed among members of the family, allies, familiars, etc. The women wail, weep, and sing the praises of the deceased in company with the people of caste who organize everything. Outside, [786] banquets and virtual orgies, complete with noisy dances and songs, are organized in honor of the deceased.

This ceremony goes on for seven days.

614 At the close of this period, the new fama is publicly proclaimed. For this purpose, the leader of the slaves has the walled-up door of the tata reopened, and the whole company assembles in the large open area in front of the house of the fama. Those present include the newly elected fama, the members of the family of the Massa-si, allies, tributaries, heads of the ton'-dyon', and the sofa.

[769] [782] An ox has been sacrificed and offered to the manes of the defunct. Its hide is stretched in the center of an open area surrounded by the crowd, and on it is spread out the sheepskin, adorned with precious amulets, which has long served as a rug for the fama of the Massa-si. Other precious family relics include [301] the scarlet cap adorned with amulets, twists of gold for the ears, and heavy silver bracelets.

The representative of the family of Kassi Konaré seats the newly elected fama on the sheepskin, puts the scarlet cap on his head, and adorns him with the gold earrings and silver bracelets. Then he makes a speech to the new fama, outlining the policies followed by his deceased predecessor and enumerating the desiderata of the people of the clan.

[567] At this point the leader of the slaves prostrates himself before the new fama and places himself in his hands to show that all the ton'-dyon' are loyal to him. He then presents individually the principal groups of slaves, tributaries, etc.

Another ceremony brings the new fama, prominent Massa-si, their allies, the principal leaders of the slaves, and the tributaries to the wood sacred to the protective idol of the clan, where a reciprocal oath of loyalty is taken. A ritual communion follows.

852 with water added (to recall the victory of Faro over Mousso Koroni). The patriarch shakes the family pembélé three or four times over the infant's head to give him the nyama of the recently deceased whose ni and dya he has inherited. Then he places the altar (kere la boli ni) on the infant's chest three times, after having recited a prayer. He cuts the throat of a red cock, dips his index finger in the blood, and traces three or four crosses on the newborn's forehead, who be-
553 comes boli din. The name is given the eighth day by the Komo chief
[431] under the doubalé, where the old people assemble. The father offers 100 kola nuts, two jars of millet beer, plus a ram whose throat is cut, and money for the griot. Part of the baby's hair is shaved off and kept in [90] a case (sebe); another part of the hair is thrown in the river as a sacrifice to Faro. The eldest of the old men examines the roots of the infant's hair and the conjunction of the eyebrows, thus determining its character (téré). Then he swings the baby seven times in an east-west direction and eight times north-south, giving him the first name of the deceased ancestor and, at the same time, his spiritual principles. The griot recite the father's mottoes, the sénanku come to joke with the baby, and the blacksmith traces the scarifications.

845 Twins. We have seen the belief that in the beginning twins were always born, and Faro subsequently punished man by abolishing double births which he no longer accords except to certain privileged persons. For the Bambara, twins are new beings who inherit neither the ni nor the dya of any ancestor. Special rites are observed at their
[201] birth which is announced by showing the raised right and left index fingers, without saying anything, for the proclamation would be so powerful that it would be harmful to the newborn twins (see G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].
553 The rite of name-giving is carried out on the bank of the river. The following day, accompanied by another woman, the mother goes in search of millet and cotton which she gathers in identical calabash ladles. Equal gifts are put in the ladles, which the mother presents
[301] in crossed hands. Later, the twins are fitted with metal bracelets representing their dya, and, in certain regions, with a pendant in the form of double slave irons. The twins always stay together; they
856 wear identical clothes. If one dies in early infancy, the mother places on the mat beside the surviving infant a small doll made by

291 [177] designs. European influence has naturally made itself felt in the fashions, and European thread is replacing native cotton thread, but the color symbolism in the bands is retained. Even though European fabrics invade the markets more and more, the traditional clothes remain the most sought after, although they have undergone certain modifications inspired by European fashions even while remaining very original.

291 531 585 Although the Bambara go barefoot, in certain circumstances they make ornamented clogs to give to the new bride. These sandals are decorated with geometric designs, engraved with a hot iron by the blacksmith, that symbolize the twinship, the multiplication of children, the parents, the husband's family, the couple's language, and the sealing of the association. These signs are encircled by the sign of the union of the whole. Also, the whole ritual of taking possession lasts for several days.

302 Coiffure. At the present time, the adult males no longer wear the traditional coiffure consisting of two plaits at the side, but the children still have their hair shaved and braided according to custom. Thus, the uncircumcised boys wear a crest of hair going from the forehead to the nape of the neck, while the rest of the head is shaved. The crest symbolizes the [99] divine serpent. The children of blacksmiths also wear, at the sides of the head, two circles of hair which are cut by lines representing the forge. When a child is born after the death of several brothers and sisters, only half of his head is shaved in mockery, so that the dya subject to this pretended neglect will decide to stay in the child. The children of Marabouts have their hair shaved in such a manner that it forms a spiral which starts in the middle of the skull and covers the whole head. Afterwards, bands of hair are shaved in a manner to trace a cross on this spiral. The little girls wear a small braid across the forehead, falling on the left side, while married women wear a braid at each side of the head. These braids are made by adding fibers of the dɔ, shining with karite, plaited with the hair. Finally, the women wear 301 22 gold rings at the ears, images of the 22 primordial elements, or sometimes a single large ring in the form of a crescent closed by threads of red cotton, which is a résumé of the 22 others. These rings keep impure words from the ear, which plays an important [177] role in generation; it is through the ornamentation that the spirits hear what is said to man.

326 as well as of silver, on a wooden core. The thrones of the ancient [531] Bambara chiefs were covered in this manner. Today the golden ornaments are no longer reserved exclusively for the wives of kings. [301] Bracelets, pendants, and necklaces are produced in large quantities in a filigree work in which the Black excels.

B. Ceramics

323 The land is very rich in pottery, but Bambara men do not model clay, pottery being a woman's art. Inversely, the women do not work on statuary.

C. Painting

531 386 The Bambara paint murals on the sanctuary walls with ocher and a millet paste. The priests make these drawings periodically. The walls of the young people's huts are also decorated with symbolic motifs: calabash spoons, festoons, ladders with 22 bars, drawings of hands, lines of chevrons. The young girls come to paint these, [387] with clay from the river or with a mixture of clay and cow dung. All these geometric drawings are signs representing not only the cosmogony, but a subtle translation of all the movements of the executing artist's soul. They are a veritable form of writing.

D. Music

533 771 Music is a privileged art (1) because it is bound to instru-

1. Griaule, Passim, "Symbole des arts africains" [Symbol of the African Arts], Présence africaine.

ments, that is to say, to materials, to the human body by the voice and the dance, to numbers by the rhythm, to medicine, to divination, and to religion.

534 771 [106] In a report to the French Institute of Anthropology on February 18, 1948, Mme. G. Dieterlen described the structure and symbolism of the two Bambara musical instruments, the Sema guitar and the royal drum.

88] as ugly as possible, and plays the fool. Armed with a long stick -- the stick which is used to stir the gruel that is simmering on the fire (1) -- she darts out of the village, agile as a gazelle. Her companions

[415]

1. To-n-galama: a stick with a large, flattened end, used to stir gruel in the pot.

all chase her at a full run, giving many shouts; they circle around the walls four times. At every fork in the path they form a circle, dance with frenzy, and throw large handfuls of basi and smoked fish sauce to the spirits without keeping count. "Dégé dounlé, idiots," shouts the smeared girl, and all her retinue repeats with ever increasing enthusiasm: "Nalouma, big fool...." And this day, which is not very edifying, is full of delights for the little Bambara girls who are to be excised.

The little soli boys are satisfied with sacrificing to n'tomo, a good fetish which is their protector, but although they dance wearing masks with six, seven, and sometimes eight horns, they do not flagellate themselves, or at least flagellation is not required on this day. [725]

2. The Soli Si Festival, or the Vigil of the Circumcised

Here we are on the eve of the circumcision! It is black night, d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer, hums and foams in the earthenware bowls, and a thin mist comes out of all the huts and envelops them. Here karité grease sputters as it melts in the pot and browns the skin of a chicken or the leg of a goat; there one hears the loud laughter of people with full stomachs, the hiccups of a glutton, the dry and decisive sound of two heavy lips releasing five great /178/ sticky fingers glued to each other by a remainder of gruel. Their foreheads decorated with beads in a kind of crown of white, red, and yellow, the colors of the rainbow, and their bodies draped in blankets, Roman style, groups of women glide silently like shadows along the alleys, carrying on their heads huge gourds full of dégé, millet flour mixed with honey water and milk. [301] [291]

The youths follow, dressed in blouses knotted at the abdomen like towels and trousers into which three pairs of legs and three abdomens could fit without any trouble, dragging drums and bass drums. To keep up the march and cause it to be forgotten (they often come from far away) they shout a loud "you you" and make coarse jokes, which are here addressed to the fair sex more than elsewhere. Sometimes also, between two laughs, two great silly laughs, something like the crack of a whip is heard. This sound is made by five stubby fingers as they are applied to the cheeks of dear little angels, warming them. In fact, a band of little boys and girls trot among the youths in their birthday suits, passing to the right and to the left and winding between their legs, and patience wears out and quickly comes to an end.

After the young people come the old men; they are bent double, leaning on spears, and even while talking of future projects they recall the days of the past. It is quite apparent that there are no more like them, their equal cannot be found. Into the foroko, the goatskins they slip over their arms and fasten on their shoulders, they have slipped some good handfuls of cowrie shells for the mothers of the circumcised and excised, a box of the snuff that every self-respecting stranger gives as a gift to the men of the village, and finally the kola nuts that the sacrificer will chew before spitting the remains onto the front side of the god and some that, as educated, well-bred men, they keep for close friends. They also carry the hens or roosters for the sacrifice; these are attached by the feet to the straps of the foroko and hung head down their wings flapping horribly.

The human flood arrives at the gates of the village, stops a moment under the big trees, and tidies itself. The pointed caps /184/ are put a little to one side of the head, the blouses are unfolded, and nakedness is concealed. On the women's side there is indescribable hubbub, like the sound of the distant ocean at rising tide; they polish and adorn themselves and beautify themselves. On their feet they put little chains, on their arms heavy bracelets that knock together with the sound of old iron, and on their hips the young girls at least hang belts of beads sprinkled with little bells that tinkle at the slightest movement. In their noses they put crescents of gold or copper, in

each ear ten to twelve rings of soft iron, tin, or silver, and those that they put on their fingers and toes number more than twenty.

On the braids of their hair, all running with grease, they hang bits of amber and rings of polished pottery as white as snow, and around all their necks are bead necklaces from which dangle bits of amber, grigris, and here and there, held by leather strips, pottery rings that fall back between the shoulders and in front on their bosoms. They also bind their foreheads with narrow crowns of rainbow-colored beads or diadems of coral. Such are the Negro girls in their most beautiful array.

At the homes of the circumcised and excised, the huts and courts are crowded with people, for in addition to friends and story-tellers /griots/ -- the poor troubadours of the country -- there may be in each home older married daughters who have come with their husbands, children, and parents-in-law, and the fiancé's delegation to his betrothed seem to be in every corner. This is really the festival of the tribe, and everybody is present; only the fiancés are excluded and cannot appear on this day. And how very Bambara it is! In one spot people quench their thirst with great drinks of d'lo, or millet beer, while nearby, squatted around steaming gourds, others stuff themselves with to, or gruel. The hands held out to you are running with sauce; the children who surround you are covered with leftovers from the feast and brandish under your nose bones that they gnaw clean with their bare teeth, and while they call to you Sogo ("some meat"), the satiated people next to you exclaim: "Abarka, thank you Ne fara san, I am full for the moment." And everywhere there is an infernal bedlam! Old women beat furiously on inverted pumpkins in conari full of water /185/; youths beat drums, women and young girls clap their hands in rhythm, and everybody shouts the glories of the family. The families of the circumcised and excised are beside themselves, so great is their joy, and if you are one of their close friends you will be shown all the gifts received, in plain sight in the court. You are made to taste of everything, to touch and feel everything, and, just as on the day when the child is given its name, you receive, on leaving, the kola nut of life (le ni woro).

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[887] Moment by moment the old women come closer and the word "Kouyo ê, Kouyo ê" resounds louder and louder. But now they come out, and their bodies move as if they were made of rings, so closely do they imitate a worm surprised by a ray of sunshine who is hastily returning to its nest in the ground. With their pointed chins, wrinkled skins, and toothless jaws, they look like real savages as they furiously scrape two iron rods; on their bald heads they wear dirty towels, the filthy appurtenances of sorceresses, wound without skill or taste. With spear in hand the young citizens appear in full trousers; they wear caps with double points or loud-colored turbans with long fringes, and their bodies disappear under loose blouses still all perfumed with the musty smell of the bottom of a storage bin, all stiff and shiny under a paste of starch. They leap and shout, they brandish their arms, assume the look of warriors, and especially assume such a look of conceit that one's laughter is unloosed.

[415] After the boys come the girls, fanning their "alms purses" all decorated with cowrie shells; these are platters braided of fine, pliable grass, doubtless those onto which the bloody remnants were placed on the morning of the soli si, or arms' vigil. They come forward stiffly,
[301] and glide rather than walk over the ground, for their feet are weighed down by small chains and iron rings, and can hardly be lifted. Gold or copper crescents pull down the septum of their noses, a handful of striped periwinkle shells hangs from the lobe of each ear, several coral necklaces encircle their heads, and everywhere, chiefly around their necks, are pieces of amber interspersed by grigris and beads of
881 every size and shade. Bambara of the nounou, or blacksmith caste,
302 the Marka turned Bambara, and every Bambara girl /196/ of more or less mixed stock whose head was not shaved at the da woro, or festival of the sixth day, has their hair braided, and on top of the crest which ends in two small braids along each ear, there is an odd little bundle, a handful of hair. This is in memory of the eighth day after the girl's birth, the day when she was given her name, and what she is wearing is nothing less than what the Bambara call "the hair of the womb" (1). If this has been lost, as is usually the case, the

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1. Newborn infants have their heads shaved six to eight days after birth; they cannot go out of their homes before being shorn of the hair of the womb (ou ba, "their mothers"; kono, "womb"; si, hair).

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292 mother provides some of hers. The dress-up outfit of our excised girls is a regular harness; two or three loincloths in layers encircle their waists, and of the actual costume, the band of cloth which shakes behind in limp and loose trains, the big pompom is all that shows. At least one can look at them and see them, as for once pretty white blouses clothe them; the long cloth slings required in the dances are thrown over their shoulders and brought to the front and create quite a pretty effect. In Bani country the girls wear a wide belt of cowrie shells around the hips and over the loincloths, and on each side two bundles of cowrie shells hang from leather thongs that pass over the shoulders and are crossed on the chest. This dousou ko (2), as it is

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2. Dousou, "soul," "heart," "seat of love"; ko, "affair," "pledge of love."

called, is the remaining portion of the bride price given by the fiancé, and is worth 5,000 to 6,000 cowrie shells.

881 Around the drums that rage in the square, behind the old women who scrape their pieces of scrap iron, and behind the female story-tellers /griottes/ who sing of their charms, their strength and their beauty, the circumcised boys and excised girls circle for a few moments and go and sit on the mats that have been prepared for them.

Kola nuts are distributed to the new citizens; gourds of dégé, millet flour mixed with honey water and milk, are placed at the feet of the girls, queens of the day, and the head of the village makes the speech that is required at the beginning of every festival. His herald, standing beside him, repeats it word by word, sentence by

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4: Henry--279 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Tattoo worn by the women of Bani country.

Tattoo worn around the breasts by young girls of Ségou and made by themselves.

4: Henry--281 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Young Bambara girls dressed to go out.

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Circumcised youth dressed up.

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Excised girl in the dress-up attire of Bani country.

Excised girl dressed up.

4: Henry--282 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8